



Office of Catechetical Ministry

DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO

Oficina para el Ministerio de la Catequesis



*Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you,
I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. – Isaiah 41:10*

With the desire to continue to be a source of hope in this time of confusion in the hearts and minds of parents, Parish Priests and Catechetical Leaders, after consultation with Bishop Barnes, we offer the following information regarding the current health concern of the Corona Virus.

Although it is true Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency, it is imperative to know the proclamation will allow more access resources, personnel and funding to aid in response to coronavirus. It is a political strategy which also allows the local state of emergency declarations to extend without being updated. Let us keep in the forefront of our mind, according to the CA Department of Public Health and Center for Disease Control and Prevention as of March 5th **the health risk from COVID-19 to the general public remains low at this time**, in both Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

With the onset of the cancelations of public events in civic and educational circles, parents are questioning scheduled Church activities. We are aware of the valid concerns regarding retreat requirements as well as large group events celebrated within the parish and off site at retreat centers. However, currently we do not advocate a general cancelation of such important events and experiences for our families. Let us remember to be vigilant and amidst the growing panic, to be a source Christ's peace which brings a sense of "calm in this time of storm."

Parish Activities:

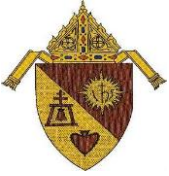
You are reminded to take all necessary sanitation precautions and to be sure to discuss procedures to follow regarding scheduled sessions and events to be hosted at the parish, most especially with large groups. We do encourage the following precautions be taken for all events happening within the confinement of parish property, which can be a controlled environment.

- 1.) Model and encourage proper hygiene practices on a regular basis. Publicly display posters provided by the Diocese, which were sent electronically to all parish DCM/CCMs on Monday, March 9th.
- 2.) Provide hand sanitizer, Lysol disinfectant spray, Clorox wipes and paper towels in every classroom, office and gathering space where sessions and events are held.
- 3.) Follow all maintenance guidelines required by the City Department of Health and increase cleaning inspection rounds, most especially during times of greater usage.
- 4.) Inform and reassure participants of action taken to maintain a clean environment.
- 5.) Limit time of large group confinement in closed spaces and try to utilize more time for outdoor activity where greater air circulation is prevalent.

Off Site Activities:

We hear the greater concern regarding events which take place beyond the parish property in retreat centers. We suggest in addition to the above-mentioned procedures, the following actions also be followed and made known to participants to reassure them precaution and preventative measures have been taken seriously by the parish staff.

- 1.) Anyone who is currently sick with a fever, cough and respiratory issues as well as their caregivers, should not attend. If participants become sick during the event and/or show similar symptoms, they should be excused from all activities.
- 2.) A deep cleaning of the site to be utilized before participant arrival. This would include a wipe down of sleeping quarters, restrooms, conference rooms and shared public space.



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- 3.) Provide hand sanitizer, Lysol disinfectant spray, Clorox wipes and paper towels in every gathering space where sessions are held.
- 4.) Limit buffet style serving of food and assign individuals to the task or use readymade individually wrapped items which can be easily distributed to participants.
- 5.) Verbally remind everyone to wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Suggestions:

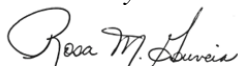
Above all, every family should be treated with respect and compassion. **It is imperative to respect a parent's personal right and responsibility to decide on issues concerning the safety and well-being of their respective child.** We are not to deny the celebration of a Sacrament due to non-compliance of a parish requirement. Page 15 of the OCM Handbook of Procedures for the Sacrament of Confirmation (September 2008) clearly states, ***NO CANDIDATE IS TO BE DENIED THE RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION because he/she did not attend a specific session, activity, special event and/or retreat.*** Alternative options should be proposed to families who choose not to participate in such events. We encourage Parishes to create teams to discuss and create alternative options to catechetical sessions and/or retreat experiences while providing a continuity in faith formation and Sacramental preparation.

A few suggestions include but are not limited to the following options:

- 1.) Provide a paper packet of resources for participant and sponsor and/or family members to participate in together, have a guided faith sharing session, complete reflection questions or general evaluation of the experience to be shared with Coordinator and/or Director.
- 2.) Suggest on-line resources provided by publishers which coincide with the textbook. Assign chapters from the textbook or approved parish curriculum to be completed by the family at home.
- 3.) Provide a list of religious movies and reflection questions to be used with families as together they learn more on the lives of Saints, the miracles of Jesus, the Sacraments and other faith topics.
- 4.) Provide alternative dates of parish-based days of reflection instead of overnight retreats.
- 5.) Offer a retreat later in the year, even including options post reception of the Sacrament.
- 6.) For overnight retreat experiences, participants can be given the opportunity to attend for one full day and not be obligated to spend the night.
- 7.) If more than one overnight is required, the participant can be given the opportunity to attend the daytime schedule of activities as the parent drops them off and picks them up daily. This allows participants to experience the retreat without having to sleep overnight at the retreat facility.

Under the guidance of the Office of the Bishop, there is great collaboration among the Diocesan Offices. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are here to support you as you accompany families. Together let us continue to provide opportunities for others to deepen their relationship with God as they follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and commit to being faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

Lord let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you!


Rosa M. Gouveia
Director